

## CATEGORIZATION OF ACTS BASED ON THE ACTS OF THE CATEGORY MISCHIEVOUS ACT

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to argue and represent the way general cognitive model of acts in English, speech and verbal associations.

**Methodology:** The article presents the results of a frame analysis of the situation of the acts of the mischievous act in the English language (prank, antic, mischief) via comparative qualitative research methods.

**Main Findings:** As a result, in the English-language associative material, the elements of the mischievous act frame are explicated in minimal. In conclusion, the considered material indicates a stable conceptualization of the category mischievous act, as indicated by the stability of the semantic content of the frame slots, regular and similar updating of the frame elements in language, speech, verbal-associative network.

**Implications:** This study indicated that the stability of the semantic content of the frame slots, regular and similar updating of the frame elements in the language, speech, verbal-associative network.

**Keywords:** *categorization, frame, slot, act, prototype, semantic group.*

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to show, by the example of the mischievous act semantic group, how the general cognitive model of acts is represented in English, speech and verbal associations, i.e. their frame. A look from the point of view of the frame approach, the theory of prototypes, allows revealing stereotypical relations in the structure of the knowledge of native speakers of English about the acts considered in the framework of the category mischievous act. The act is of interest among representatives of different scientific fields. The works of philosophers [Bakhtin \(1984\)](#), [Letyagin \(2014\)](#) speak about interest in this concept; psychologists. In linguistics, the act is also in the center of attention of researchers. The vocabulary denoting acts in the English language is considered in the linguistic and culturological, semantic, and psycholinguistic aspects ([Obidina, 2008](#); [Aydarova, 2013](#); [Bushuyeva, 2016](#)). Researchers agree that the main characteristics of the act are its focus, singularity (as opposed to behavior), evaluation by another person/people (as opposed to action) and a certain result to which an act leads. The basis of this study is the hypothesis that the signs of the act, which are indicated by researchers in different areas of knowledge, are reflected in the lexical system of the language, in speech, as well as in the verbal associations of language speakers. Frames are verbalized in language and speech, represented by conventional values linguistic units, different types of their relationships and connections, the nature of the deployment in the text, are fixed in the associative-verbal network of speakers.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The human perception of a new phenomenon or situation occurs through comparison with the already familiar, passed through the perception of experience: we interact with the world, relying on its image in our mind; we build (construct) this image based on background knowledge and current needs ([Iriskhanova, 2014](#)). Knowledge about the world is embodied in the so-called linguistic picture of the world of a language. The linguistic picture of the world is reflected in the language of the way of perception of the world and its understanding (interpretation) by a person or a group of people united by a worldview based on a common ethnic culture. The linguistic picture of the world is the result of a specific linguistic conceptualization of the world ([Apresyan, 1986](#)), i.e. the world perceived by consciousness and existing in a shortened and simplified display of the entire amount of naive ideas about the world ([Demyankov, 2016](#)). The linguistic conceptualization of the world is "a specially organized experience of our interaction with the outside world, which is also postponed in the semantics of the language in a special way" ([Radbil, 2017](#); [Matandare, 2018](#)).

Ideas about the world are revealed in mental representations: concepts, conceptual schemes, and models of the situation. The frame is one of such conceptual structures. A frame is defined as an economical method of transmitting information, accelerating the process of its processing and reflecting the main points of close situations belonging to the same class; a unit of knowledge that is organized around a certain concept and contains data on a typical and possible concept for this within a certain culture ([Dake, 1989](#)). One of the characteristics of the frame is that it includes the full range of knowledge about the object or situation that exists at a given historical moment in a given society. The frame helps to put together fragments of reality, to structure the perception of new experience, for which a person determines a place in the system of already existing data. The frame in the framework of the theory of prototypes is understood as an entity based on a certain norm, a prototype - a reference representative, the initial sample for many objects, which contains what unites these objects into one class ([Rosch, 1978](#)). Determining the belonging of an object or its properties to one or another category, a person

compares, compares the available knowledge about the prototype with the obtained knowledge about a knowable object (Mulyono et al., 2018; Peres et al., 2018).

At the moment of perception of a particular situation, much depends on what appears to be a figure (consciousness) for a person, and what is a background (subconscious), main and secondary profile (Levitsky, 2010; Haghshenas et al., 2015). This is related to the distribution of the individual's attention, which, trying to determine whether an object belongs to a particular category, relies on a prototype that most closely correlates with the key parameters of the object and removes insignificant properties (on the focus of attention – see). Conceptual structures, including the frame, have a dedicated part and there is a shadow part. The ratio of the selected and the shadow parts of the conceptual structure of the same situation has national specifics in different languages (Radbil, 2017). In modern linguistics, frame studies are relevant and are conducted on different materials, see, for example, (Murashova, 2014; Ryabko, 2016; Bakhyt et al., 2018; Bakhshandeh et al., 2015).

## METHODOLOGY

All this determines the necessity of applying a number of methodological procedures when solving the problem of frame modeling:

1. Analysis of the vocabulary semantics of words;
2. Analysis of the compatibility of tokens representing the frame;
3. Analysis of the contextual values of these units;
4. Analysis of their associative links.

The sources of the research material were data from authoritative explanatory, synonymous dictionaries, associative thesaurus (Edinburgh Associative Thesaurus: electronic resource), texts included in British National Corpus (BNC) (BNC: electronic resource).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. what is the vocabulary semantics of the acts of the mischievous act in the English language?
2. what is the compatibility of tokens representing the frame of the acts of the mischievous act in the English language?
3. what are the contextual values of the acts of the mischievous act in the English language?

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mischievous act category is represented in English by the lexemes prank, prankish, prankishness, prankster, antic, mischief, mischief-maker, mischievous. These lexemes are considered within the framework of one group on the basis of the common feature irresponsibly playful, which stands out in the meaning of all the listed lexemes: prank - a mildly mischievous act; ludicrous act (Merriam Webster dictionary: electronic resource); Antics - funny, silly or strange behavior mischief - playful misbehavior, especially the Oxford dictionary: electronic resource). The mischievous act frame includes 2 slots:

1. Agent of the act and his / her features (prankster, prankishness, mischief-maker);
2. Evaluation of the act/agent of the act (prankish, mischievous).

In English dictionary definitions, the characteristics of the elements evaluation of the act/agent of the act, agent of the act and his / her features, act motive are presented.

- a. An ambivalent assessment, obviously, is the most characteristic for the group of acts: «antics – behavior which is ridiculous and dangerous» (Oxford: web source); «prank – a trick that is intended to be funny but not to cause harm or damage». A negative score is more characteristic of the lexeme. Mischief: «mischief – bad behavior (especially of children) that is annoying, but does not cause any serious damage or harm» (Oxford: web source).
- b. In English, the agent of the act prank is verbalized, presented in the dictionaries in relation to the action performed: «prankster – a person who plays pranks on people». The adjective mischievous in relation to a person emphasizes the predisposition to commit tricks: «mischievous person likes to have fun by playing harmless tricks on people or doing things they are not supposed to do» (Collins dictionary: web source). It is noted that the acts of the group are peculiar to the child: «mischief – bad behavior (especially of children)» (Oxford: web source); «prank – a childish trick» (Collins dictionary: web source).
- c. The motive is not updated in the English language by special lexemes but presented in the vocabulary descriptions. The motive of the act mischief is defined as the desire to cause trouble: «mischief-maker – a person who deliberately causes trouble»; «mischievous act is intended to cause trouble» (Collins dictionary: web source); at the core of the prank act is the desire to have fun: «prank – a trick that is intended to be funny but not to cause harm or damage» (Merriam-Webster dictionary: web source).

Thus, in the lexical system of the English language, the frame of acts of the mischievous act group is presented as a structure consisting of the elements: the agent of the act is the person who performs the acts of the group/child; the motive of the act - the desire to bring trouble / have fun; assessment of the act – ambivalent. In the speech, in the distinguished part of the mischievous act frame, there are elements of assessment of the act/agent of the act and action underlying the act. The degree of actualization is determined by the number of contexts in which the frame elements are explicated. A total of 647 contexts with group representation tokens were considered. In 62% of the studied contexts, the slot evaluation of the act/agent of the act is updated; in 20% of contexts, there is a slot action underlying the act. At the periphery of attention are the elements of the agent of the act and his / her features, act motive and act result: 12% - the slot agent of the act and his / her features; 5% - slot act result; 1% - slot act motive.

**Slot Evaluation of the act/agent of the act.** In BNC contexts, group tokens are mainly used with negatively-valued adjectives. There are some examples that reveal a positive assessment of acts and their agents. Compare: antics playful / roguish / pretentious / crazy / silly / outrageous / wicked / spiteful / bizarre / wild / ruthless; prank stupid / cruel / evil / dangerous; childish / student / boyish / schoolboy. Compare with contextual examples: «Somehow you can put up with and even smile at a stranger or workmate's silly antics and daft behavior, but when someone close to you starts rubbing you up the wrong way you will explode» (Liverpool Daily Post and Echo: Leisure pages, unknown, 1985-1993); «Enough has been revealed about the antics of the Monarchy in the past few weeks to suggest that people in palaces should not be trying to tell the rest of us how to behave»; «On one famous occasion an aspiring pro, later to play in the Ryder Cup, was so incensed by the antics of his pro-am partners that he left the course in mid-round».

**Slot Action underlying the act.** A common feature of all actions that as a result are the names of the groups is that they go beyond commonly accepted behavior. Compare: «As a schoolboy prank he leaned forward to staple the boy in front's jacket to his chair» (Scottish amicable newsletter, UK: South, 1985-1993); «Sack for a handcuff prankster. A computer expert was sacked when he handcuffed himself to his woman boss while she was on the phone to a customer. He committed an assault by restraining Miss Cooper against her will» (Today, UK: South, 1985-1993); «A case was heard in Croydon Magistrates' Court on 6 December 1917, described in the press as Boy's dangerous prank. Some boys had been jumping on the backs of trams, when the conductor's attention was distracted, giving the emergency bell signal, stealing cash boxed and jumping off» (The tramways of Croydon, UK: South, 1985-1993). In English discourse there are examples of violation of the prototypical action of the act: it is clear from the contexts that an innocent act was originally conceived (correlated with the acts of the group in question), but resulted in a serious offense: «A 17-year-old youth who was arrested after trying to hijack an airliner as a prank may face charges, an airline said today» (The Belfast Telegraph, UK: South, 1985-1993); «The newspaper Paris Soir reported the antics of Liverpool supporters with some confusion. They had been drinking, but they did not seem to want to fight anybody. They were too busy shoplifting, with the main targets being clothes and, of course, trainers» (The face, UK: South, 1985-1993).

**Slot Agent of the act and his / her features.** The acts of prank, antics, mischief are characterized by a common agent - this is a child, as a rule, who has a cheerful and lively disposition. Compare: antics infantile / boyish, childish; prank student / youthful / juvenile / childish / boyish / schoolboy and BNC examples: «She probably looked like a guilty schoolgirl caught out in some prank» (A warning of magic, UK: South, 1985-1993); «Silly, crazy antics like this were all part of being young» (Garden of desire, UK: South, 1985-1993); «A wayward child, forever up to mischief and straining at the bit to dash around, is not necessarily hyperactive» (Aromatherapy massage with essential oils, UK: South, 1985-1993). These acts are committed by people of different ages, but the knowledge that this is an act peculiar to a child is always in presupposition. Compare: «Not the sort of thing one expects from our side, a childish prank, more suited to the Liberals» (New Statesman and Society, UK: South, 1985-1993).

**Slot Act result.** The prototypical result of the acts considered is seen as 1) damage to the agent of the act or to a third party: «Killed by prank with the car window. A prankster who dangled his head out of a car window was killed when he was hit by a lorry coming the other way» (CBF today, UK: South, 1985-1993); 2) punishment of an agent of an act: «Bully postmen put a boy of nine in a mailbag and threatened to post him. His mother Kathleen told an industrial tribunal: The postmen put a sack over his head and threatened to post him to Hull. Postmen Andrew Holt, 23. Jonathan Atkins, 19, and Damon Shearer, 20, all of Withernsea, were sacked for the prank» (Today, UK: South, 1985-1993).

**Slot Act motive.** Single examples suggest that the basis of acts is not malicious intent: «Shakespeare called PUCK the lob of spirits, inferring he was a prankster who essentially meant little harm» (Myths, gods and fantasy: a sourcebook, UK: South, 1985-1993); «We was all into mischief, but it was never anything wrong, you know what I mean?» (Nottinghamshire Oral History Project: interview, UK: Midlands, 1975-1984).

In the English-language associative material, the elements of the mischievous act frame are explicated in minimal. In the EAT, prank, mischief units are presented as incentives. Reacts to the prank stimulus reveal the agent of the act: childish 1, schoolboy 1, and also indicate the frivolous nature of the act: jest 1, trick 1.

## CONCLUSION

The study showed that ideas about the acts of the mischievous act group are conceptualized in English, speech and verbal associations in the form of a frame that has the following logical-cognitive structure: slots Act motive, Agent of the act and his / her features, Action underlying the act, Evaluation of the act/agent of the act, Act result. Some components of this

structure receive a lexical representation in the form of words with corresponding lexical meanings: agent (prankster, mischief-maker); evaluation of the act/agent of the act (prankish, mischievous). Other components of the frame model are actualized in the lexicographical interpretations of frame tokens or get verbalization in the discourse, associative reacts (motive, action, result). The degree of expansion of slots in the language-system, speech, and verbal associations is not the same. The slots Evaluation of the act/agent of the act, Action underlying the act is updated in the lexical system of the English language, in speech. Some signs of actions in which the acts of antic, prank, and mischief are embodied are explicit in the associative-verbal network of English-speaking people. The slots Agent of the act and his / her features, Act motive are indicated in the dictionary definitions of frame tokens-representatives, as well as updated with the texts of the BNC. The least explicable of all the slots of the frame is the slot act result, which receives explication only at the speech level.

In general, the analysis performed indicates the following prototypical features of the frame elements. The agent of acts, which basically corresponds to the child, performs an action contrary to the generally accepted rules of behavior. Malicious intent is rarely behind the acts of this group, as a rule, they are motivated by the desire to have fun. Acts receive a different assessment, but in English, the negative assessment prevails. As a rule, negative consequences are the most natural for the acts of the category mischievous act: damage to the one who is involved in the situation of the act, punishment of the agent of the act. The contextual analysis clarifies the content of the frame by updating the elements' action underlying the act, act result, while act motive is more fully expressed in the dictionary definitions.

The analysis shows the effectiveness of using the frame approach to study the situation of the act. The considered material indicates a stable conceptualization of the category mischievous act, as indicated by the stability of the semantic content of the frame slots, regular and similar updating of the frame elements in the language, speech, verbal-associative network.

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